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## Office of Transition Initiatives **COMMUNITY COHESION INITIATIVE** **QUARTERLY REPORT MARCH – JUNE 2012**



### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and Creative Associates International, Inc. (Creative) launched the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) in March 2012. CCI follows from and builds upon OTI's previous programmatic iteration, the Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI). The program operates at the district level in Regional Command East (RC-E), Regional Command South (RC-S), and Regional Command Southwest (RC-SW) and seeks to increase resilience in areas vulnerable to insurgent exploitation by:

- (1) strengthening ties between local actors, customary governance structures, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA)
- (2) increasing cohesion among and between communities.

### **PROGRAM AREAS**

The program operates in the 'hold' phase of the stabilization continuum in order to support communities to resist further insurgent influence. CCI also supports transition in 2014 and the need for improved formal and informal governance structures, as transitional arrangements are realized. The program focuses on strategically important districts within Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces in the South, Helmand in the Southwest and Ghazni, Khost, Kunar and Paktika in the East.

Creative works with the OTI country team under a 'one-team' approach. OTI Field Officers (FOs) based in the field (PRTs, DSTs, etc.), in collaboration with Creative Regional, Provincial, and District teams, create regional strategies and district workplans to guide CCI activities. These strategies are aligned with the CCI's national strategy, goals, and objectives; as well as the strategic and operational objectives of civ-mil efforts in the areas of operation. CCI activities will be multi-sectoral and address specific priorities, problems and grievances of local communities. Activities will center upon the implementation of clusters of small grants projects. Examples include stabilization/cohesion jirgas, strategic communications support to GIROA to improve and extend their messaging, networking and media activities, capacity building and skills training, small infrastructure rehabilitation, equipment procurements, and cultural events. CCI's objectives will be met through an inclusive project management process that brings communities together with GIROA to realize the project's goals. Under CCI, project processes are as important as project products in contributing to the program's strategic goals of producing linkages and cohesion.

#### **FAST FACTS**

Start Date: March 2012  
Budget: \$161 million (ceiling)  
\$50 million (to date)

#### **USAID/OTI**

<http://www.usaid.gov>

## COUNTRY SITUATION

### Transition

During this reporting period, the political landscape was dominated by considerations on how best to implement the agreements reached at the December 2011 Bonn Conference on the transfer of full civil and military responsibilities to GIRoA by 2014. The reality of Bonn and its heralding of the departure of international assistance forces and a much diminished development effort, affected the population, particularly among the educated elite. Anxieties were allayed to some extent at the beginning of May when President Obama signed a strategic partnership agreement with President Karzai that pledged continued military support for ANSF for a further decade after 2014. Despite this agreement, many anxieties remained, especially in relation to concerns about accelerated capital flight and possible economic collapse due to some funding gaps.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

June 25 - 27	First CCI SRS – Kabul International Club
July 1 - 15	First five grant concepts for Kandahar Province submitted
July 15 - 31	First grant concept for Kandahar Province receives green light
July 15 - 31	Completion of roll-out of Ghazni, Kunar, Khost, Helmand and Uruzgan provincial offices
July 15 - 31	First six grant concepts for eastern provinces submitted (2 per province)
July 15 -31	Ten more southern grant concepts submitted
August 1 - 15	Completion of roll-out of district office in Muqur, Ghazni Province
August 1 - 15	First southern grant in implementation
August 1 - 15	Ten more southern grant concepts submitted
August 1 - 15	Twelve more eastern grants submitted (six per province)
August 1 - 15	Ten more southern grant concepts receive green light
August 15 - 31	First southern grant completed

## GRANTS SUMMARY

Since March 2012, CCI has not yet begun to fund grant activities, but has focused its efforts on standing the program up in each area of geographic focus.

## ACTIVITIES

### South

Operationally, CCI has made strong headway in the establishment of offices and the disposition of equipment from ASI South. An office and residence were established in Asian Village, outside of Kandahar Airfield. Equipment was procured and an IT network was established. The location was selected because of its proximity to the airport and Kandahar City. A provincial office was also established in Kandahar City. This low-profile office will serve as a base for district and provincial staff. Once offices were established, the Kabul-HQ staff began training and building the capacity of Kandahar program staff on grants development and CCI program and operations implementation policies.

During the reporting period, CCI developed regional strategies for the South and Southwest and district workplans. CCI also began introducing the project to U.S. government and GIRoA stakeholders and potential community partners. Introductory meetings were held with U.S. government stakeholders (USAID, USDA, DoS and the Military). After consulting with U.S. government stakeholders, the program was then introduced to GIRoA at the provincial level, followed by introductions in the districts of Spin Boldak, Zhari and Kandahar City. These meetings provided CCI with points of contact and established lines of communication with GIRoA partners. Meetings continued at the district level with key community members and GIRoA counterparts, beginning the process of concept development. During the next reporting period, grants concepts and applications will move ahead and grants implementation will begin.

### East

During the report period, handover and equipment disposition between ASI East and CCI was ongoing with an estimated completion date of September 2012. Creative staff and OTI Field Officers focused on building the operations infrastructure of the project, including; staff recruitment, office set-up and relationship building with

relevant U.S. government stakeholders. Core provincial staff was recruited in Kunar, Khost and Ghazni. Provincial staff, as well as HQ-Operations, completed the set-up of provincial offices in these provinces. Staffing at the district level is currently underway and will be completed during the next reporting period.

Programmatically, CCI has focused on the development of a regional strategy and district workplans. These district workplans will serve as a blueprint for program implementation, once program implementation begins in the next reporting period.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

During its first quarter, CCI got off to a good start. Much time has been invested by OTI and Creative collectively crafting new strategic directions, refining programmatic processes and protocols and completing the alignment of respective staff resources. CCI is confident that this will produce dividends and position the program to run smoothly and better capture its objectives in the future. The different handover timelines between southern and eastern components generated a two-speed roll out. In the South, project roll-out has been delayed by difficulties in finding qualified staff and programmatic implementation space that wasn't already on-budget for GIRoA or inundated by funding. In the East, start-up is meeting predicted deadlines and is, if anything, ahead of schedule.

The need for greater speed in standing up the program in the South, specifically Kandahar, exposed the difficulties of implementing in a crowded programmatic landscape. Finding staff experienced in USAID programming, untainted by previous incidents of corruption or mismanagement is difficult. Creative immediately encountered this problem when it discovered it had hired a number of individuals who were already intent on corrupting the program. Corrective termination actions were implemented and a new team is now in the process of being built.

The crowded programmatic environment also constrained the development of CCI's first grants concepts in Kandahar. Resistance to preliminary provincial strategies was encountered, as was the difficulty in finding clear programmatic space, unimpeded by other implementers despite the fact that CCI's focus is qualitatively different from regular programming currently underway in the area. Though both of these factors could hamper CCI's future flexibility and speed, CCI is confident it will be able to adapt its practice to meet these challenges. Implementing strategies through the development of quid-pro-quo project negotiation with communities and local GIRoA officials and collaboration with other programs and donors may prove two ways of moving forward. However, the programmatic environment in Kandahar gives initial cause for concern and raises questions as to whether it still provides fertile ground for OTI's brand of programming to continue to grow and be effective.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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